

Message from Lt. Gen. Burton M. Field
Commander, U.S. Forces, Japan
March 17, 2011

Last Friday, 11 Mar 11, began a life-changing journey beginning with the historic 9.0 magnitude earthquake, resulting tsunami, and the nuclear power plant issue that changed our focus and future in Japan.

We face an incredibly complex problem. I am very grateful for your hard work, your patience, and your resilience in the face of this challenge. After the initial shaking stopped, you got right to work supporting an unbelievable Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief operation, providing the helping hand of a neighbor and friend to the Japanese people, hit so hard, and to many who have lost so much. Truly impressive.

Our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen and civilians are totally supporting the people of Japan, the Japanese government, the Japan Self Defense Forces and the Department of State, with search and rescue, reconnaissance, sea survey, logistics support, planning, and direct liaison 24/7 since last Friday evening. It has been very hectic, you have been tested hard but you all have stepped up and provided superior support.

Based on the deteriorating conditions and uncertainty of the current situation, this afternoon the Department of State authorized the voluntary departure of DOS spouses and families. DOD soon followed suit for specific locations. Although we don't have specific indications of any spread of radiation at amounts harmful to American citizens, this is a precautionary measure to ensure the optimal safety of our people in Japan.

The process of moving this many people will be another significant activity for our forces while continuing our HA/DR mission. The JTF Commander for the departure activity is CG III MEF, with the rest of us in support. I ask for your continued patience and understanding as we work through this complex process. Additional guidance will be provided by your Service Components, and we will push out updated information as it becomes available.

I know we have asked a lot of you and your families this past week, but what we have done is of tremendous service to one of our closest Allies and the close friends and neighbors with whom we have shared so much for over 50 years.